

Older Workers Roundtable

September 9, 2014

1:30-3:30 p.m.

Legislative Office Building Room 2A, Hartford, CT



**Co-hosted by Connecticut's Legislative Commission on Aging and the
US Department of Labor, Women's Bureau**

Participants:

- Jean Baur; rep. for Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, "Back to Work" Coach;
- Matt Brokman, AFSCME
- Joseph Carbone, President and CEO, The Workplace Inc.
- Nora Duncan, State Director, AARP-CT
- Dave Garvey, Encore!Hartford
- Senator John Kissel, co-chair, Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
- Arlene Lugo, Dept. of Rehabilitation Services
- Sharon Palmer, Commissioner of the Dept. of Labor
- Tom Phillips, President & CEO, Capital Workforce Partners
- Alice Pritchard, Executive Director, CT Women's Education and Legal Fund
- Margaret Gerundo-Murkette, Acting Commissioner, State Dept. on Aging
- Rep. Mary Mushinsky, co-chair, Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
- Judy Resnick, Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA)
- Representative Peter Tercyak, Co-chair of the Labor Committee
- Carolyn Treiss, Executive Director, Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW)
- Angela Rizzolo, US Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau
- Judy Rosenthal, Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford, Employment Transition Services
- Julia Evans Starr, Executive Director, CT's Legislative Commission on Aging
- Dianne Stone, Director, Newington Senior and Disabled Center
- Novlette Williams

Data and Background

Presentation by Miriam Kluger, Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee on the “Reemployment of Older Workers” Report

Report: [Reemployment of Older Workers, December 2013](#)

Presentation: [Reemployment of Older Workers, Miriam Kluger, Program Review and Investigations Committee](#)

CT-N Coverage: <http://www.ct-n.com/ondemand.asp?ID=10662>

Highlights of presentation:

- 41.6% of 50+ unemployed were unemployed for more than 52 weeks in 2011 (after the Great Recession) compared to 14.6% remaining unemployed more than 52 weeks in 2007 (before the Great Recession).
- The manufacturing and construction industries displaced the most 50+ workers during the Great Recession
- Barriers to reemployment include: skill set deficits, erosion of existing skills during long-term unemployment, lack of current job search skills, emotional barriers, financial barriers and age discrimination
- Barriers to long-term unemployment: regardless of age, those employed the longest are least likely to find work; some job ads requires applicants to currently be employed
- There are a multitude of programs to assist with reemployment but improvement needed in communication of available resources
- Few programs are specifically geared to 50+ but generally targeted programs are still beneficial
- Technology and basic computer skills are necessary for any job

Overview of PA 14-225: An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Program Review and Investigations Committee on the Reemployment of Older Workers

- Requires DoL by 1/1/2015 to develop or approve an annual informational campaign about the Departments Apprenticeship Program
- Requires DoL to convene a working group to determine whether people who provide resume-writing assistance at the One-Stop Career Centers must have a certified professional resume writer credential
- Requires DoL by 1/1/2015 to develop or approve a one-page quick reference guide about resources available to older unemployed workers. The guide must be accessible through 211 Infoline
- Requires CETC to coordinate an electronic state hiring campaign to encourage the reemployment of older workers
- Requires the Board of Regents, within available resources, to implement the “Plus 50 Initiative” model through the regional Community Technical College System
- Requires the Board of Regents to develop accountability measures and establishes certain reporting requirements for noncredit vocational courses and programs

Read the [Office of Legislative Research’s Summary](#) for a more comprehensive review of the Public Act.

Roundtable Participants' Ideas/Suggestions

- Important to use “person-centered” employment training (Deputy Cmr. Gerundo-Murkette)
- Everyone who provides resume writing help should be credentialed. (Cmr. Palmer)
- State law should restrict discrimination of long term unemployed in advertising (Novlette Williams and several others)
- The Supreme Court made age discrimination the most difficult to prove. AARP national wants parity with other protected classes and has worked to get a bill introduced in Congress (Nora Duncan)
- Need for more formal networking opportunities (sitting behind the computer will is not the way to get a job) (several roundtable members)
- Need training opportunities to help older workers overcome confidence challenges, interviewing with energy, knowing how to sell themselves (several roundtable members)
- Must train educate employers to the assets of hiring older workers, develop website and downloadable information for employers about the assets of older workers. There is a 98% retention rate for people that have gone from corporate to non-profit sector, they are not just biding time until they can get a corporate sector position. (Dave Garvey)
- Develop facts vs. myths about older workers for employers (audience member)
- Make sure people are getting connected to safety net programs (Julie Evans Starr, Alice Pritchard and Judy Rosenthal)
- Many people are forced into retirement (retiring before they are ready). Need affordable health care and the potential to save for retirement. Need to help people save for retirement and save for financial challenges as they arise. (Matt Brokman)
- DOL should be a portal for information (Rep. Mushinsky)
- Need to expand apprenticeship programs – but also need to make sure that DOL is not unintentionally discriminating against older workers for those apprenticeship slots (Rep. Mushinsky)
- Older workers (and younger workers) need education about how to interface with the each other. They have different generational goals and methods. (Beth McCabe – audience member)
- Need training that is based on learning styles of older workers: greater emphasis on person-to-person vs. video/internet training. (Beth McCabe – audience member)
- Flexible schedules that can accommodate working outside of traditional hours (audience member)
- Cross generational and cross cultural training opportunities and dialogue (audience member)
- Build off the CoA’s “Redefining Retirement Years” initiative which promoted workplace flexibility, telecommuting, various types of compensation and benefits, phased-in retirement. See link to [Redefining Retirement Years research, recommendations and facts sheets](#). (Julie Evans Starr)

Next Steps:

- Share notes and network with roundtable participants
- Help ensure implementation and success of the various mandated elements of PA 14-225
- Re-introduce legislation – a recommendation by LPRIC – to prohibit in a job posting that an applicant must be actively employed to apply. See [HB 5054](#).

Additional Comments from Roundtable Participants:

Opportunities

- Entrepreneurial activity is an increasing option for older workers. 55-64 year olds had the biggest increase in starting business, from 14% in 1996 to 23% in 2012. (Miriam Kluger)
- Lots of opportunities for older workers are around the corner – CT will have a shortage of skilled workers, there is a possibility for older workers to fill those slots (Commissioner Palmer)
- Lots of existing resources for unemployed workers (several participants around table)
- Need to understand/embrace the diversity of older adults. Currently have 3 generations of older adults living today (Dianne Stone)
- Employers' need to be more competitive has never been more intense than it is today (can be both positive and negative) (Joe Carbone)
- Part time employment is surging (employers want opportunity to test out the candidate and offer part time employment) (Joe Carbone)
- Mature workers have extensive experience and learning capacity that enhances the bottom line of a company (Beth McCabe – audience member)

Challenges

- Employers concerned how older workers will affect health insurance rates.
- Older workers still have financial responsibilities – mortgages, children's college loans, caregiving responsibilities of an older parent, grandparents raising grandchildren (several roundtable participants)

Older Women Workers

- Older women workers face particular barriers that older men do not. (Alice Pritchard, Carolyn Treiss)
- Tend to be the family caregivers - May need flexible work environments (Nora Duncan, Carolyn Treiss and others)
- Women have, throughout their life, had to work part time to care for children or have left employment all together to take care of children or aging parents, usually during the prime of the careers. Interruptions in employment history lead to greater insecurity in older age. (Carolyn Treiss)
- Gender discrimination still exists so older women suffer from both gender and age discrimination. (Carolyn Treiss)
- Need legislation about equal pay for equal work (audience member)

Discrimination

- Legislation from 2014 session regarding employment advertisements and discrimination of long-term unemployed was very watered down throughout the session (Representative Tercyak)
- Discrimination exists at many levels (heard from all members of roundtable participants).
- The longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to gain employment (Tom Philips)
- Employers look immediately at the date of birth on the application when screening (Judy Rosenthal)

- There are stereotypes that exist that older workers will want more money and that they will not be around long and will retire soon (Tom Phillips)
- In the 1982 recession, the most protected class was people over the age of 50 because loyalty to the employer was highly valued. This recession, older workers are the most vulnerable because of misconceptions that if you are out of work for a long period of time you have missed too much and can't learn new things and/or have gotten lazy (Joe Carbone)
- The dynamics of this recession have disguised age discrimination (Joe Carbone)

Confidence

- Older worker may feel don't have skills, not capable, afraid of trying something new (Judy Resnick and many others members of the roundtable)
- Many older workers are scared and depressed. Not in a good frame of mind to successfully go through the interview process (Joe Carbone and many other members of the roundtable)
- Need to embrace change, be enthusiastic about new technology, social media (Tom Phillips)
- Employers need to recognize different learning styles
- People over age 50 have key attributes that make the experience of lay off/loss of employment pervasive and traumatic (Beth McCabe – audience member)

Resources

- Fractured information (many participants of the roundtable), difficult to find information about available programs and services to help

Technology

- Keeping up with the technology and utilizing on-line application processes is difficult in the Senior Community Employment Program (Margy)
- Older workers need training in newer technology (audience members)
- Older adults need to take full use of social media (Tom Phillips)
- Older workers must have basic computer skills for employment (Miriam Kluger)
- So many applications are sent into employers they must have ways to screen out – use software to screen using buzzwords (Joe Carbone, Jean Baur)

Current Programs

- Many programs and services exist for the unemployed (see Miriam Kluger's powerpoint)
- [Senior Community Service Employment Program](#) – State Department on Aging – provides job training skills to low-income individuals and 55+ unemployed. Utilizes holistic approach including evaluation of stressors and family issues. Pay \$20/week during on the job training. (Acting Commissioner Margy Gerundo-Murkette)
- DOL – provides free resume-writing services. There is a credentialing process for those who provide this service. (Commissioner Palmer)
- AARP recognizing employers who are good employers to older workers (Nora Duncan)
- AARP career fair and webinars - employers sign a pledge if they are interested in employing older workers (promoting that older workers expand possibilities not limits them), will also be offering skill-based workshops (Nora Duncan)

- [Schmoozer's Job Network](#) (Judy Rosenthal)
- [Seniors Job Bank](#) (In West Hartford but extending to other towns) – help with interviewing techniques, background checks, provides some counseling and support
- [Platform to Employment](#) has had much success (89% of participants are hired when their 8 week period is over) and now has state funding. See the [60 Minutes](#) clip about Platform to Employment
- FIRST program – Focused Reemployment Success Training designed for professionals dislocated after 2009. Served 125 people, 70% over the age of 50.